

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-11 AID-05 /073 W

----- 092087

R 141223Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6748

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

S E C R E T BANGKOK 0826

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR TH US

SUBJECT: EFFECTS OF THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT ON
RESIDUAL MILITARY PRESENCE NEGOTIATIONS

REF: BANGKOK 0641

SUMMARY: MFA AMERICA DIVISION CHIEF WORAPHUT CHAIYANAM SAYS
THAT THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT SHOULD NOT SERIOUSLY
DISRUPT CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY
PRESENCE IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY

1. WORAPHUT TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 14 IN THE COURSE
OF A DISCUSSION OF OTHER ISSUES THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE
DISSOLUTION OF THE THAI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JAN 12,
AND THE CARETAKER STATUS OF THE RTG, WOULD SERIOUSLY
INTERFERE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO MAKE THE
NECESSARY DECISIONS ON THE LONG-TERM U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE.
HE SAID THAT MOST PENDING POLICY DECISIONS WERE ALREADY

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COVERED BY PREVIOUS OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS (AND

THEREFORE BY IMPLICATION FELL INTO THE ROUTINE BUSINESS CATEGORY). HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE FINAL AGREEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MUCH MORE EXPLICIT THAN HAS BEEN THE PRACTICE HERETOFORE. HE SAID IT WAS THE UNWRITTEN, TACIT UNDERSTANDINGS THAT MADE TROUBLE FOR THE RTG WHEN THE PRESS OR THE PARLIAMENT BEGAN TO INVESTIGATE THEM.

2. WORAPHUT WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE BELIEVED THAILAND'S NEW AND MORE PRECARIOUS SECURITY SITUATION NOW MADE THE THAI PUBLIC MUCH MORE WILLING THAN IT WAS A YEAR AGO TO ACCEPT A RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. AT THE SAME TIME HE POINTED OUT THAT THE MARCH 20 WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE COINCIDED WITH THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE FINAL DECISIONS ON WHAT WOULD REMAIN AFTER THE DEADLINE WOULD RECEIVE INTENSE POLITICAL AND PRESS SCRUTINY.

3. IN RESPONSE TO AN OBSERVATION THAT WHAT WOULD REMAIN WOULD LARGELY BE INTELLIGENCE FACILITIES, WORAPHUT SAID HE SAW NO NEED TO BE UNDULY SPECIFIC AS TO THEIR PRECISE ACTIVITIES. WHEN WE MENTIONED THE U-2'S BY NAME, WORAPHUT SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD NOTHING TO LEAD HIM TO INFER THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CARETAKER STATUS WOULD INFLUENCE ITS FINAL DECISION ON THE U-2'S ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. HE SAID THAT THE THAI MILITARY WOULD HAVE TO DETERMINE WHAT U.S. ACTIVITIES WERE IN THAILAND'S INTEREST, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT (INCLUDING - EVIDENTLY - MFA) WOULD ABIDE BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DECISION. HE CONCLUDED THIS PORTION OF THE DISCUSSION BY PRAISING GEN. SAIYUT KOETPHON'S HIGH QUALIFICATIONS FOR AND BALANCED APPROACH TO THE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: WHILE WORAPHUT IS A SINGLE SOURCE FOR THE ABOVE INFORMATION AT THIS TIME, HE IS BOTH CAUTIOUS AND WELL INFORMED ON THE SUBJECT. IT IS SIGNIFICANT AND HEARTENING THAT EVEN MFA HAS NOT SEIZED ON THE NEW SITUATION AS AN EXCUSE TO GO MUSHY AND EVASIVE ON THE MANY TICKLISH POLICY DECISIONS ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE STILL FACING THE RTG. WE WILL BE PROBING THIS QUESTION FURTHER IN THE DAYS TO COME, AND WILL HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF THE RTG STANCE AS NEGOTIATIONS PROCEED.

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WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, MILITARY BASES, NEGOTIATIONS, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BANGKO00826
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760014-0080
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760160/aaaacaus.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BANGKOK 641
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <29 SEP 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EFFECTS OF THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT ON RESIDUAL MILITARY PRESENCE NEGOTIATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, PGOV, TH, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006